BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

2007-05825/

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2007FOR0039-000383
April 3, 2007

Ministry of Forests and Range

UPPER SIMILKAMEEN INDIAN BAND SECURES WOODLOT

HEDLEY – The Upper Similkameen Indian Band will receive $135,000, establish a woodlot and gain access to more than 256,000 cubic metres of timber through two forestry agreements reached with the Province, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"A major goal of these agreements is to diversify British Columbia's forest industry, while creating economic opportunities for First Nations," said Coleman. "The Upper Similkameen Indian Band will be able to use its new timber volume to support its existing forestry operations and expand its new furniture-making business."

The band's woodlot volume will total up to 1,624 cubic metres of timber annually. A second short-term mountain pine beetle agreement grants access to 256,480 cubic metres of wood over five years. Timber volumes for both agreements will come from the Merritt Timber Supply Area.

The Upper Similkameen Indian Band is one of the biggest contractors working in the Cascades Forest District, harvesting an average of 200,000 cubic metres of timber annually. Its forestry enterprises include harvesting, engineering, silviculture and archaeological research. It also runs USIB Wood Products, which ships pine furniture to Alberta and across B.C.

"We believe in pursuing every opportunity to improve the lives of our people and to contribute to the surrounding community," said Chief Rick Holmes. "The agreements recognized today support that vision."

The Upper Similkameen Indian Band has eight reserves and 65 members, most of who live in Hedley.

Since 2002, the Province has reached agreement with 127 First Nations, providing $166.5 million in revenue and access to 24.4 million cubic metres of timber.

-30-

Media contact:
Jennifer McLarty
Public Affairs Officer
Ministry of Forests and Range
250 387-4592

Chief Rick Holmes
Upper Similkameen Indian Band
250 499-2221

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.